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Peter C. Siguenza
January 27, 1992

Unknown Interviewer – Majority of interviews conducted by Rose Manibusan or Daniel Martinez.

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Interviewee: Peter C. Siguenza

Military Rank: Marine Corps, 3rd Marine Division

Interviewer: Unknown

Unknown (Guam?)

Date: January 27, 1992

[00:00:00]

Q2: War in the pacific oral history, 92—4, take 9

Q: Today is January 27, 1992 can you please state your name?

Siguenza: My name is Peter C. Siguenza

Q: You were with the third marine division; can you talk a little about that, your time?

Siguenza: I was with the 3rd marine division during World War II. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in April 1942 at San Diego, California and I trained at the marine corp. depot in San Diego, I happened to be there because I was attending school, I was a sophomore at San Diego State college. After training at the recruit depot, I was sent to camp Eliot to join the 3rd marine division and from camp Eliot, we went to camp Pendleton to complete our training. From camp Pendleton we went overseas and the first stop was Auckland, New Zealand from New Zealand we went to Guadalcanal and we trained at Guadalcanal for pacific jungle operations. Our first operation with the 3rd marine division was the invasion of Bouganville on 1 November 1943. The next operation was Guam for the 3rd marine division, I was with the division and we were in a convoy on transport, I was on the U.S.S DuPage coming to Guam. Outside of Guam at Asan my orders came through for me to return to the states because I was selected to go to officer's candidate school. I asked our commanding general who happened to be onboard the ship I was on--The DuPage--I asked our commanding General Turnage if I could get permission to not return to the States because I wanted to make the landing at Guam, but he told me that as a marine my duty was to obey the orders of the Marine Corps. So I was transferred to a destroyer and on that destroyer we were sent back to Pearl Harbor

and Pearl Harbor to California and from California to Gwanako, Virginia. When I was commissioned, again I was flown out to Guam to rejoin the 3rd marine division, at that time it was already secured, my buddies had gone back because it was time for them to return, so I joined another outfit and we were training here in Guam for the invasion of Japan.

During the period that we were in training, some problems were occurring around the island, principally the bases, where the U.S. troops were—for instance the CB camp at Asan they were reporting harassment fire from Japanese. One of the battalions that was sent out to clear that area was my battalion from the 3rd division—3rd regiment—we were organized to combat patrols to secure the area from commander naval forces Mariana COMNAVMARIANAS the top of the MAR today down to marine drive and all the way to Agat. In this operation there must've been about fifteen patrols operating on line down towards the sea, we succeeded in flushing out some Japanese stragglers who were behind the village of Tamuning, this took place for about two weeks. I think the result was successful because I understand the area was cleared and there had been no more harassment fire.

[00:04:54]

The process was to continue training for the Japan invasion when on September 2, 1945, while we were stationed at Yona Guam the message came in that the Japanese--that the war was over, the Japanese had surrendered, so there was much joy among the troops of the 3rd marine division; many of the people who had been overseas for a long time were getting ready to be returned to the States. I remained in Guam because I happened to be in the regular Marine Corps, I was not a reservist, so I had to wait my time and I served--. The 3rd marine division was disorganized, and some of the men joined other units, some were sent to China or other places--I was sent to--. I was retained right here in Guam and I was assigned to island command. Island command was the organization that had responsibility for the government of the island, the predecessor of the government of Guam; it was under the commander marine, two-star General Larson. While I was with the island command I served my time until mid-1946 when I served my four years of active duty and I was returned to San Diego.

Q: Can you talk a little about the time you were scouting for the Japanese in the jungle areas,

I understand some locals served as scouts and assisted the 3rd division.

Siguenza: There were some interesting experiences for me because in many of the villagers I would either have relatives or close friends, and they would see us either passing through the village or passing in the back of the village. On one of these occasions I remember one gentleman who I knew before the war, who asked me if I had lunch already, I said, no, whether I had lunch or not, I don't think I would've admitted anyway because we were having sea rations. So he asked me if I wanted to eat CHamoru/Chamorro food, he said he had Dungeness crab cooked the CHamoru/Chamorro way and rice, so, of course I accepted his offer and I went to his home and took a little time off and ate with him.

[00:07:53]

The other experience was a little humorous way because as we were passing behind the village of Tamuneng, which is next to Piti, the homes there where the people live had open windows, and one of the ladies inside the house looked out and in Chamorro said that no wonder the marines can't catch Japanese because they are looking for women. Of course, I thought that was ridiculous, so I stopped my platoon and they were all anxious what was the woman saying and what was I saying to her, and I said, well you folks have a reputation that you're after women not Japanese and of course they disagreed with that. But because I was speaking CHamoru/Chamorro this woman didn't know there'd be a CHamoru/Chamorro marine and she almost fell out of the window, she was quite surprised. I didn't identify myself, but I didn't ask her name either, but I was pretty sure she was very much surprised that somebody would understand what she just said. I didn't consider it derogatory, but it was a little amusing and humorous because marines are marines wherever they are and I can not say that they are not interested in women.

Q: Can you talk a little about the Japanese stragglers and what process was that?

Siguenza: It was our experience that the remaining Japanese troops, stragglers were very strongly motivated not to surrender. I had an experience where during one of these patrols I was given a Japanese officer to help us and he had a speaker with him and his function was to

speak at the edge of the jungle for these people to come out if they were still in there because the war was over. It was my observation that because they were still Japanese stragglers after our patrols that they saw and heard the encouragement by their own troops and officers to come out and give up, but apparently they were not all willing to do that. An example many years later there were two Japanese stragglers that were found in the marble area near Dededo Yigo and of course the well known sergeant [Yokoy] after twenty eight years came out—he didn't come out, he was found by two local hunters, they found him and had him come in, they captured him in a sense, so he came in. But I don't believe at least heard of no Japanese straggler who willingly surrendered, I thought that they were highly motivated in keeping honor to their country as soldiers of Japan.

Q: Do you remember how many as far as numbers were actually brought in?

Siguenza: It would be very difficult to state a number because what we were doing really was to flush them out. I know that the area that we had worked and patrolled where they before they were causing harassment fire on some of the camps, after we were through in that area we thought that we had cleaned it out completely because there were no further harassment fire. I think at the other end of the Agat, Santa Rita area, two or three Japanese stragglers were caught and picked up, whether that was a result of our battalion in patrol, I'm not sure. But I remember one incident where we almost came up on a Japanese straggler because we found a sack of rice on the ground and when we picked it up the place where you handle it was still warm, so apparently somebody had been there and didn't have time to take the rice with him, so he left it that was another example of these people not wanting to give up and continuing to roam as long as they could.

[Interruption]

Q2: World War in the Pacific oral history, Mr. Siguenza, 92—5, take 11

Q: Can you tell us a little about what the changes were from pre-war to you actually returning with the 3rd Marine Division in 1944?

Siguenza: I was born in Guam and I grew up in Agana and until I was ready for high school in 1936, I left. In those days it was very peaceful, slow type of lifestyle. I was young then and I remember playing with many of my friends my age group and we would be playing in the Plaza de Espana. Quite often we would wake up early to attend mass because we were altar boys and choir boys, and in those days the masses would be set around five o'clock. So before the masses we would be playing hide-n-seek in the Plaza and of course we were making a lot of noise, so now and then--the Plaza is right next to the Governor's Palace--so now and then the Marine Century from the Governor's Palace would come over where we were and tell us to cut the noise down or leave the area. Well we would leave for a short while until he goes back to his post and we'd would assemble again and start playing. The consternation and I know we must've been making a lot of noise and in those days the particular noise activities were very much controlled by the existing naval government. It's true that we were forbidden from whistling, we were forbidden from taking and doing many things in Agana, not that they were illegal or immoral or whatever, it was just the policy of the naval government, principally the Governor who is usually a four striper, a navy captain. We grew up in that kind of an atmosphere, I learned early about the distinction between locals and the state siders, the Caucasians because we had two types of schools, I went to the public school and there was an American school where only the children of the officers and the men of the armed forces--the navy principally the marine corp.--would go, we were not allowed to get near that place. I remember also as a young person I would like to go to the movies, and because my father was in the navy I thought I had privilege, but I would try to enter the movie house, at [dorm hall] and I would be told that I couldn't get in. So what we'd do we would be watching the movie from outside and again we were making a lot of racket and sooner or later someone would chase us away, many incidents like that.

But I must say on balance the administration of the navy was beneficial, if not benevolent to the islanders because they stressed sanitation, they provided schools for us, medical care dental care, and obviously of course they provided the police department and the police took charge of security around the island. Another thing that I remember every person—male--who reached sixteen years of age had to join the Guam militia, I joined the militia myself for six months because I had to, but I didn't stay too long with the militia because I left Guam to go to school.

The distinction between my experiences as a young person here in Guam and the later experiences as I came back as a marine was very significantly different obviously. My first experience when I came back was I saw the destruction of the island, the homes in Agana and I'm from Agana, many of the homes, my own home and my neighbors were destroyed by the bombardment by the navy.

Many of the people were given housing in the various villages, they built villages for instance in Barrigada and Sinajana, and many of them moved away from Agana to go to the respective villages where they were assigned. My parents happened to have a home in Agana that was still standing, except that the roof was blown off, but it was still habitable and they stayed there, all they did was put a tarpaulin over the top and they were able to stay there and they had the benefit of power and water as compared to the other people who lived in villages, where those luxuries were not in existence. My memory of the island during that immediate period after the war was that the place was destroyed, the people were scattered and the whole thing changed and I could see that it will never probably change back again because Agana was—people moved out of Agana, so there was not much activity going on, except that if you want to meet local people, CHamoru/Chamorro people you would have to go to Barrigada or Sinajana.

[Interruption]

Q2: World War in the Pacific oral history, Mr. Siguenza, 92—6, take 12

Siguenza: Recently, the island commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese invasion, which was December 8, 1941 and we had several events that took place, one major event was honoring the few local heroes who were in the insular guard and they were the ones who actively resisted as long and as much as they could when the Japanese landed, until they were told to surrender by the Governor. In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, the veteran's affairs office invited--after consulting with the veteran's affairs' group on Guam--invited kin of Japanese war--the Japanese troops that were here during World War II. They had a special ceremony up in the Paget area where they have a building honoring a leader of there's, this is a church related group. I met the ten Japanese veterans, they are about my age group and I met each one of them and shook hands with each one of them, I was introduced as

a captain in the marine corp. during World War II and with that whether that gave them the impetus to salute or whatever, they did bow low and I recognize that's a sign of respect for them.

Looking at them I just thought about the war experiences, where at one time I was hunting for them and my mission was to get rid of them—kill them—the policy that we were taught in the marine corp. was to during invasion and during the process of combat that we were to eliminate resistance, one way or the other, so I don't remember any unit close to me who were taking prisoners, if they saw Japanese troops ahead their mission was to get rid of them, as I talked and shook hands with these people I thought a lot about that.

I felt that over the years—

I told them that I have forgiven, I know that some of my buddies still have the feeling that they were still very much against the Japanese, but my position and my own personal viewpoint is that I have forgiven and that there is much more to be gained in the world by peace rather than by battle and by war. After World War II--after several other battles--I'm just wondering what really did we gain here we are, we fought the Japanese and look at where we are now. I think that the sense of getting into war has to be considered a lot more closely by our political leaders because from my viewpoint it is a waste of manpower and a waste of money—funds. We should be striving towards development of improvement of mankind and the achievement of peace in the world.

[00:27:32]

[END OF INTERVIEW]